

BIRKBECK COLLEGE, LONDON NEW BUILDING

AT three o'clock in the morning in the "Crown and Anchor" public house in the year 1823, Dr. Birkbeck was elected president of the London Mechanics' Institution, then and there founded. That institution has grown and thriven for more than a hundred years and still serves the student who has to pursue learning and earn his living at the same time. The adoption of the name "Birkbeck College" in 1907 symbolized the growing claim to university status, and the admission of the College as a School of the University of London in 1920 marked the accomplishment of ambitions which long existed among its teachers and students. In 1930 the Court of the University set aside part of the University site in Bloomsbury for a new building for the College, the premises in Fetter Lane of which, though referred to at their opening in 1885 as "spacious and convenient", had become quite inadequate.

In spite of generous benefactions from many sources, sufficient money was not accumulated until 1939 when the new building was started. However, operations had to be abandoned in 1940 with only the steel skeleton erected. Work was resumed after the War, and the hopes and labours of so many years culminated on April 28 when H.M. Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, patron of the College, visited the new building. In the presence of a distinguished gathering in the Senate House of the University, Her Majesty was welcomed to the College by the Master, Dr. J. F. Lockwood. The president of the College, the Right Hon. Lord Justice Denning, then invited the Queen Mother to declare the new building open. In her address, Her Majesty referred to the "absorbing story" of the College's development and to those whose enterprise turned what might have been a story of disaster into a record of triumph. "To you," she concluded, addressing the students, "we confidently look for the preservation and enrichment of our civilization."

Having unveiled a commemorative inscription in the entrance hall, Her Majesty inspected part of the

new building. She was received in the Psychology Department on the fourth floor by Prof. C. A. Mace and Mr. A. Rodger. During the inspection of the Psychological Laboratory, Her Majesty was shown experimental studies on perception, learning, fatigue and other topics representative of the normal work of a psychological department. Among research activities in applied psychology displayed in the laboratory were an investigation into new methods of plotting the movements of aircraft, and the training of a blind worker by a blind instructor in skilled assembly work. A case study in vocational guidance was also in progress during the visit.

On the third floor, occupied by the Chemistry Department, Her Majesty was received by Prof. W. Wardlaw, Dr. D. J. G. Ives and Dr. D. H. R. Barton. She passed through the main teaching laboratory, with accommodation for ninety students, where she watched a practical class in progress, and spoke to some of the students.

The Queen Mother then inspected the library, which includes a particularly large and attractive reading room. Before leaving, Her Majesty took tea in the Council Chamber.

In addition to the Departments already mentioned, the new building houses the Departments of Physics (Prof. J. D. Bernal), Zoology (Prof. W. S. Bullough), Geology (Dr. A. T. J. Dollar), Botany (Prof. C. T. Ingold), Geography (Prof. W. G. East), and Mathematics (Prof. A. C. Offord).

The Faculty of Arts has accommodation for its staff in Malet Street; but most of its teaching is done in space kindly provided by neighbouring institutions.

Of the 214 degrees awarded to Birkbeck students during the session ending July 1952, forty were postgraduate. The facilities which are now available for research will make possible a wide extension of opportunities for students who wish to prepare for the higher degrees of the University of London.

HUMAN PERFORMANCE

THE third symposium of the Ergonomics Research Society was held in the Department of Human Anatomy, University of Oxford, during April 13-16, the subject being "Human Performance, its Measurement and Limitations". The diversity of disciplines related to the study of the relation between man and the environment in which he works was well illustrated by the number of scientific departments represented; among the hundred and thirty members and visitors who attended were leading workers from many parts of the world, including, in particular, Scandinavia, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and the United States. The deliberations fell into two main categories: those with a predominantly physiological approach to the efficiency of performance in hard manual work, and those of a psychological nature dealing with some of the lighter industrial work processes. The discussions revealed a clear realization of the complementary roles of these different methods of assessing human performance and the necessity of relating them realistically to the problems actually confronting the pro-

duction engineer. They also indicated the gap that exists between fundamental work and the application of relevant results to industrial work.

In his opening address, the chairman, Prof. W. E. Le Gros Clark (Oxford), directed attention to the interplay of fundamental and *ad hoc* research on which successful ergonomic investigation depends. As long as the ergonomic research worker, stimulated by some practical problem, has the freedom to develop his interest in the more fundamental aspects, the subject can be regarded as a suitable one for university departments. Of the various difficulties attending such research, he stressed in particular the inadequacy of the present supply of human subjects for laboratory tests.

Sir Charles Lovatt Evans (consultant physiologist, Ministry of Supply), in an introductory address, dealt with the contributions which human physiology can make to the improvement of work and working conditions. Human physiology has reached a stage in its development where, generally speaking, it possesses the necessary basis of method and theory for the